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SOURCE Prace.VILLAGE RICH CHARGED WITH SABOTAGE

The trial of engineer Miroslav Deml and his associates was held in the state court in Prague, on 18 and 19 September. Dr Vojtech Rudy presided over the court, and the prosecutors were Dr Vladimir Buras and Jaroslav Adamec.

On trial with Deml, a former landowner and JZD (Unified Agricultural Cooperative) agronomist in Lodenice u Prahy, were Antonin Janda, Josef Hanus, and Vaclav Zeman, village rich who were also former leaders in the Lodenice agricultural cooperative. They were charged with deliberate and systematic sabotage within the cooperative and blocking the town's road to Socialism. The accused forced their way into a JZD and, assuming the role of "experienced" managers and "skilled workers," they managed to seize control.

Deml, a former member of the Agrarian Party, was also able to commit a crime against the Czech nation during the occupation, since he was a confidant of the Gestapo and of the Sicherheitsdienst (Nazi security service). He openly admitted that he was a great admirer of Fascism. During the occupation, he enthusiastically aided the Nazis, helping them to force Czech farmers to make huge deliveries which had been prescribed. On his own estate, in the village of Moravka, in the Beskyd Mountains, he entertained Nazi representatives and traitors of the protectorate government. Whenever partisans appeared in the vicinity of the village he would inform the German raiding divisions, and he also saw to it that the villagers who aided the partisans were arrested. As a result, the Nazi military court sentenced 40 inhabitants of Moravka to death or imprisonment in a concentration camp.

Deml's former employees testified that he had exploited them mercilessly, forcing them to work until they collapsed and constantly threatening to expose them or have them sent away to do forced labor in the Reich. Following the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet army, however, he assumed a different attitude and became associated with influential people, and thus he was able to conceal his past. He testified that in February 1948 he already realized that the death knell had sounded for private enterprise. For that reason he rented

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his estate and became an agronomist on the farms of the Gramofon enterprise in Lodenice u Prahy. There he became acquainted with Landa and Hanus. Deml said that they agreed to establish a false JZD in order to prevent elimination of the village rich, so that they could retain their property and influence over the small farmers.

Landa, former owner of a 27-hectare farm, led the cooperative; Hanus, owner of an estate of similar size, was on the board of directors; and, hiding within the cooperative, were all of the village rich from Lodenice and from neighboring obecs, such as Zeman from Sedlec, for example. Deml became the cooperative's agronomist.

"We wanted to operate in such a manner," Deml admitted, "that this pseudo-cooperative would be a discouraging example for the small and middle farmers in the neighborhood, and it would prove that socialization of the rural districts is an impossibility, that cooperative farming is bad."

The village rich seized every opportunity to damage the cooperative; at the same time, as was their custom, they plundered for their own gain. They failed to observe the agrotechnical time limit in preparing the fields and planting seedlings. In the fall of 1950 they neglected to disk their fields, to plow deeply, and to use fertilizer. However, Deml falsified the notice concerning the results of the fall work, and the cooperative became the victor in the JSCZ (United Federation of Czech Farmers) okres competition. As a result of this chicanery, the cooperative workers lost confidence in the competition, and thus there was a low per-hectare output of grain, vegetable oils, and cultivated crops. Approximately 11 hectares of the soil remained unworked. In the spring of 1951, Deml ordered that potato seedlings be converted into cuttings, even though the field had not been prepared for sowing. The saboteurs stored the cuttings in a cellar and did not begin planting them until they were rotten. Only the intervention of the people's administration prevented this sabotage from being carried out to its conclusion. As Deml admitted, he concocted the "expert" theory that it is possible to use rotten potatoes as seedlings. The consequences of this "experiment" were revealed during the 1951 harvesting when only three quintals were harvested on a one-half hectare plot. Also, the grain planted by the saboteurs germinated sparsely. They permitted 300 quintals of cut alfalfa to rot in the fields from June until November, while the cooperative stored barely one half of the estimated sugar-beet production.

Furthermore, Deml directed the sabotage activity in animal products, knowingly making arrangements for inadequate portions of feed and thereby decreasing the fertility of the sows; as a result, the cooperative had to purchase sucklings. Furthermore, with such machinations he made it possible for his associates to divert some of the feed supplies for their own use.

Concerning the working morale of the cooperative members, Deml said that Landa was the leader of the field crews. The work in the fields was extremely poor. The horses were harnessed at 0730 or 0800 hours, and they were unharnessed in 2 or 3 hours. The midday rest periods were unduly long, and Landa made all assignments in accordance with his own judgment.

Antonin Landa, former JZD president in Lodenice, was the next witness. He admitted his evil intentions and demonstrated how he had intended to lead the cooperative into a state of disorganization.

The result of the "village rich" mismanagement of the Lodenice JZD was a loss of more than 1,100,000 crowns, poorly cultivated fields, a disorganized economy, rusty machinery, and a ruined animal-products industry. Landa contributed his share in helping to destroy the Soviet breeding sheep which the cooperative had acquired in the fall of 1951.

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Josef Hanus, likewise, appeared to the court as a greedy person. Although formerly he had been an enthusiastic worker in an agricultural cooperative, he detested the USSR, the Communist Party, and the working class. He admitted that he had participated in the sabotage within the cooperative. As a tractor driver, Hanus had used his tractor for his own benefit. Further, under the pretext of making preparations for cooperative poultry farms he had the roofs of buildings on his own property repaired.

Vaclav Zeman, the last of the defendants to be heard, owned a 50 hectare farm in Sedlec. In order to gain admittance into the cooperative he had given Deml a pig. Deml, together with Landa and Hanus, saw to it that Zeman was accepted as a JZD member. Zeman's working morale was very bad. Nevertheless, he was more than amply reimbursed. Thus the saboteurs wished to demonstrate that, even in the cooperative, only property ownership counts, not work. Even prior to Zeman's entrance into the cooperative he demonstrated that he was inexorably opposed to having his village accept the cooperative system. He assaulted the president of the MNV (Local National Committee) in Svaty Jan pod Skalou and, as a result, he received court punishment.

The second day of the trial was opened by the concluding speech of Dr Vladimir Bures. Then the defense made its last appeal, following which the senate of the National Court recessed for consultation.

The sentence: Deml, sentenced to death, the loss of his entire estate, and loss, for all time, of his honor and civil rights; Landa, 24 years in prison; Hanus, 22 years in prison; Zeman, 20 years in prison. Furthermore, each defendant was deprived of his entire fortune, his citizenship rights, and residence.

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